



New England Agricultural Statistics Service

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Survey Announcement - For Immediate Release

NATION'S 26th CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE BEGINS THIS WEEK

The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) began mailing the 2002 Census of Agriculture to every farmer and rancher in the Nation this week. This survey marks the 26th national measurement of agriculture since the first agriculture census was taken in 1840. Only America's farmers and ranchers can supply the answers needed to produce a useful, accurate picture of this vital industry.

The census report forms ask basic questions about land use and ownership, crop acreage and quantities harvested, livestock and poultry inventories, value of crops and livestock sold and farm operator characteristics.

For anyone with a stake in agriculture, census data are the best sources of information on farmland use, acres harvested by type of crop, value of products sold, acres with fertilizers and pesticides applied, number and types of livestock raised and sold, cost of fuels and energy consumed, interest expenses, value of machinery and equipment, farm labor, direct sales, number of hired workers, and much more. First-time census data will include computer and Internet use, production contracts, characteristics of multiple operators per farm, more specialized livestock data, grain storage capacity and certified organic acreage.

Farmers are being asked to report on their operations for 2002 and return their completed forms by February 3, 2003. Because of its importance to our Nation, the law (Title 7, U.S. Code) requires every individual who receives a report form to answer the census, whether they currently farm or not. This same law protects the privacy of individual responses. Census responses are strictly confidential. They will be seen only by NASS employees and will be used only for statistical purposes. No data will be disclosed on any individual operation. In fact, even copies retained by farmers and ranchers are immune from legal process. Results are provided only in statistical totals summarized to the county, state or national level.

NASS has provided a convenient toll-free number, 1-888-4AG-STAT, for producers who need help completing their form. Farmers and ranchers, who do not receive a census report form by the end of January 2003, can call the toll-free number to ensure they are counted.

The 2002 Census of Agriculture results will be released in February 2004, at www.usda.gov/nass/. For more information, call the Agricultural Statistics Hotline at 1-800-727-9540.